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Eight Bluetooth Headsets Under the Microscope

My last review of the Scala-500 Bluetooth Headset got me thinking that I had perhaps missed to see some of the uniqueness that other BT headsets might have to offer.

With this in mind I got another six BT headsets (plus the Palm Wireless Headset which I already had) and set out to get to the bottom of their value proposition and 'special features'.

Below are all the BT headsets that I selected (in no particular order) and the overall rating that I gave them:

1. [Palm Wireless Headset](#) (8/10)
2. [Jabra BT250v](#) (7/10)
3. [Scala-500](#) (6/10)
4. [Sony Ericsson HBH 300](#) (9/10)
5. [Motorola HS850](#) (7/10)
6. [Bluespoon AX](#) (6/10)
7. [Logitech Mobile Freedom](#) (6/10)
8. [Sony Ericsson HBH 662](#) (9/10)



								
Price	69.95	79.95	49.95	99.95	99.95	99.95	54.95	109.95
Battery Life								
Talk time	7 hrs	7 hrs	9 hrs	10 hrs	8 hrs	6 hrs	7 hrs	5 hrs
Standby time	7 days	8 days	7 days	13 days	4 days	12 days	10 days	6 days
Charging Time	2 hrs	2 hrs	2-4 hrs	2 hrs	2 hrs	4 hrs	4 hrs	2 hrs
Call Features								
Auto-link	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ringtone	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Redial	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
Call Reject	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
Call Waiting	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No
Design								
Weight (oz)	0.59 oz	0.80 oz	0.58 oz	1.05 oz	0.70 oz	0.35 oz	0.80 oz	0.78 oz
Weight (gm)	0.17 g	0.23 g	0.17 g	0.30 g	0.20 g	0.10 g	0.23 g	0.22 g
Accessories								
Wall Charger	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	Yes
USB Charger Adapter	-	-	-	-	-	Yes	-	-
Car Charger	Adapter	Optional	Optional	Optional	Optional	Adapter	Optional	Optional
Sound Quality (Treonauts Rating)								
Outbound	7/10	7/10	6/10	9/10	8/10	7/10	6/10	8/10
Inbound	7/10	7/10	6/10	8/10	7/10	6/10	7/10	8/10
Design (Treonauts Rating)								
Quality	8/10	9/10	8/10	9/10	7/10	8/10	7/10	9/10
Fitting Ease	9/10	7/10	9/10	7/10	8/10	8/10	6/10	9/10
Comfort	9/10	9/10	9/10	9/10	7/10	8/10	7/10	9/10

Palm Wireless Headset (8/10)

Pros: Small, light, comfortable, easy fit, supports all Treo 650 call features, charges using standard Treo charger, can be charged with optional [wall](#), [USB](#) and [car](#) adapters, good build, value and sound quality

Cons: No additional accessories of any kind in the box

Overall: Still among my favourites. Great value. Hard to find many faults...

Jabra BT250V (7/10)

Pros: Very nice build quality, boom mic, vibrating, nice extra with belt clip holder

Cons: Big and bulky. In-ear design difficult to fit

Overall: For me at least getting it on the ear is a bit of a hassle but at least once it's on then it's extremely comfortable. Possibly a good choice for the office.

Scala-500 (6/10)

Pros: Excellent included accessory kit with eyeglass/sunglass clip, belt clip holster and neckband, very small and light charger, light and comfortable headset

Cons: Sound quality is below average

Overall: If it wasn't for the sound quality issues this headset would be at the very top of the charts. However, it's still terrific value for its price.

Sony Ericsson HBH 300 (9/10)

Pros: Excellent build quality, boom mic, innovative charging stand, excellent sound quality with noise reduction, longest talk and standby time (10hrs & 13days), included headset stand ideal for office

Cons: Big, bulky & heavy, no charging indicator light

Overall: I would not recommend it as a headset while on the go because of its size but if you're looking for a top notch BT headset to use at work then this is undoubtedly the one.

Motorola HS850 (7/10)

Pros: Innovative foldable boom microphone saves battery when not in use, very small when folded

Cons: Poor build quality, no auto-link (need to press button to activate BT call), expensive, uncomfortable.

Overall: It's a shame that parts of this headset are of such poor quality – particularly the ear loop. It's pretty much the only headset that I would easily fold and hold in my pocket. Shame about the sub-par sound quality which is unacceptable at this price.

Bluespoon AX (6/10)

Pros: Ultra-small and light (a mere 10 grams), charges via USB, very innovative design with rubber stick bending in your ear to hold, second longest standby time of this lineup (12hrs), comes with neck strap

Cons: Expensive, below average sound quality

Overall: Sound quality unfortunately lets it down badly but if you absolutely want a gadget that makes you feel like 007 then this is pretty close.

Logitech Mobile Freedom (6/10)**Pros:** Cheap**Cons:** Big, bulky and ugly, awful ear clip makes for uncomfortable fit**Overall:** At the very bottom of my list. Surprising to see that Logitech, a company which otherwise make some very decent and well designed products, have released this.**Sony Ericsson HBH 662 (9/10)****Pros:** Excellent build quality, only headset with LCD display (caller ID, battery indicator and time elapsed), comfortable, easy fit**Cons:** Shortest talk time (5hrs), most expensive headset [UPDATE: Since writing this review the HBH-662 has been reduced from \$109.95 to only \$84.95 – at this price it is not only a real bargain but also the clear winner in this lineup.]**Overall:** I really like the LCD display which provides me with the battery status and time elapsed after a call (caller ID is a bonus but just a gimmick in my opinion). It rates among the very top in build quality and I'm very tempted to make this my primary BT headset. Shame that the charger is just a bit big and that it doesn't come with a desk charging stand like its sibling the HBH 300.

So, combining all the best features of these BT headsets, this is what would make a near 'perfect' one for me in the future:

- Charges with standard Treo charger (plus wall, USB and car with adapters)
- Has an easy on/off button to save battery when not in use
- Weighs less than 20 grams
- Has an LCD display with battery indicator, caller ID and time elapsed
- Comes with a desk charging stand, belt clip, eyeglass clip and strap
- Excellent build, comfort, ease of fit and sound quality

Treonauts look at all the angles before making a choice...

Posted by Andrew on August 12, 2005 at 03:55 PM

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Comments

1 by Jim McCoy | Aug 12, 2005 4:07:57 PM

It would be nice to see "can do multiple pairings" listed in the table. This was the deal-breaker for me on many of the headsets reviewed and the reason I eventually went with the Palm Wireless Headset.

2 by Kurt | Aug 12, 2005 5:24:49 PM

You forgot to mention the best part about the Moto 850: it turns off completely when you fold it up, and turns on instantly when you unfold it. Therefore you can leave it off (not in standby) when you aren't using it. This feature alone makes it the best of the breed, IMO.

3 by Mario Burgos | Aug 12, 2005 5:53:38 PM

Jabra BT250V has been a total flop for me. Everyone I talked to when using it complained about the choppy call quality. It's a shame because I really liked the feel. Truly weightless and I could let it sit for hours in my ear without the slightest irritation.

Speaking of irritation, I filled out the form to contact e-mail support about two weeks ago and have yet to receive a response. Probably the last Jabra product I buy.

4 by Paul | Aug 12, 2005 7:15:10 PM

Do you know if a bluetooth headset can be used as headphones to listen to Real Player or Pocket Tunes on the Treo 650?

5 by BenJoe | Aug 12, 2005 10:11:22 PM

Hmm...I have been waiting for a review like this. I can't decided between the real expensive Ericcson and the Treo 650. A buddy can get it to me 20% off but still I don't know. But this review as put me almost to the edge of knowing exactly what I want.

6 by Doug L | Aug 13, 2005 2:02:51 AM

Was plantronics forgotten? I had the impression they would have the best sound quality, hands down. Otherwise, thanks for the reviews, very helpful.

7 by Murad Kheraj | Aug 13, 2005 9:15:18 AM

I have used the Treo 650 headset, the Scala 500, and the Jabra BT250v. Of the three, I have found the Jabra to have the clearest sound quality and the easiest to put on. The Treo 650 headset was just too difficult to put over my ear.

Also, I am able to do redial with by Jabra. You have to make sure you set it up for Handsfree Profile (press the phone button and the volume up button when setting up).

Murad

8 by A. Davis | Aug 13, 2005 2:22:53 PM

Paul - I've tried 3 different BT headsets (only 1 of which was in this review). I haven't found one yet that supports stereo and thus will not play music. You might consider this though http://pocketnow.com/index.php?a=portal_detail&t=reviews&id=675&p=2

Apparently, they're UK only right now but Expansys is supposed to carry them soon. Right now, I have regular Palm earbuds and a BT headset. I hate over the ear headphones and much prefer earbuds. I've been waiting for a good bluetooth earbud solution, but haven't found one yet, though. However, the very near future should bring us at least two that look promising, and both double as a BT headset. One is at the link above. The other is supposedly coming soon from Nokia (sorry, lost the link... forgot to bookmark it).

9 by TreoEntertainer | Aug 13, 2005 8:16:40 PM

I had the Jabra 250 for 9 months before the 650 was released on Cingular. It worked perfectly on my Nokia, but it never worked that well on the 650. I bought the Treo Headset, it works flawlessly - truly hands free like a wired headset would. However I find it uncomfortable and I loved how the Jabra was comfortable and almost invisible to wear. Does anyone know if the Jabra 250v has a better handsfree profile than the 250 did? I'd buy it in a heartbeat. Please respond here or email me.

10 by Kentian | Aug 14, 2005 10:18:46 AM

suggest you to include headset like HS-21W, those wired wireless headset, much much more comfortable to use the clipping something over your ear all day long!

11 by Chris | Aug 15, 2005 5:06:28 AM

comment/question: I was under the impression that the Sony HBH-600's Caller ID function did NOT work. I thought that the Treo 650 only supported Bluetooth 1.1 and not 1.2, which include the profile that allows for Caller ID. If this is untrue, please tell me because I'd be excited!

12 by Andrew | Aug 15, 2005 10:25:54 AM

Chris - that's positive, the caller ID function on the HBH 600 works perfectly well. It displays the first five numbers and then scrolls for the rest.

Jim - I'll have to look at each for the multiple pairing issue.

Kurt - I agree with you, the Motorola HS850 is an interesting headset - particularly when it comes to its on/off feature. However, as I pointed out, both the build and sound quality are not great for a headset in this price range.

Kentian - I also have a BT headset similar to the Nokia HS-21W that you mention but personally I find clipping the base to be a hassle.

Cheers, A.

13 by Murad Kheraj | Aug 15, 2005 11:25:20 AM

TreoEntertainer - please see my comment regarding BT-250v. Thanks.

14 by Fredrik | Aug 15, 2005 11:50:34 AM

Interesting comparisons. However, the table says (in the "Weight (gm)" row) 0.17 g etc when you probably mean 17 g. Yes, I know, metric units are like black magic to most North Americans. :-)

15 by Andrew | Aug 15, 2005 11:56:49 AM

Fredrik - Oooops... Thanks for pointing it out!

Cheers, A.

16 by Crimson | Aug 15, 2005 12:26:35 PM

Hey Andrew, for the SE headset, is it the HBH-600 or HBH-660? You make reference to both. The link says 600 but in your shop its linked to 660 and also says 660 in the table. I'm just curious in case there's a design difference between the two. I may pick that or the Treo BT.

17 by Andrew | Aug 15, 2005 12:34:59 PM

Crimson - Ooops... Thanks, corrected. It was the Sony Ericsson HBH-660 and not 600...

Cheers, A.

18 by Nutreo | Aug 15, 2005 12:55:39 PM

Good reviews. Only two regrets: (1) I wish that you had included the Tekkeon EZ Talker Mini: a good light-weight BT headset that works well with the Treo 650, and (2) wish that you had addressed the issue of setting variable pairing passwords, sure to become an issue now that programs are available to intercept BT communications w/in 300 feet.

Thanks for the reviews.

Nutreo

19 by A. Davis | Aug 15, 2005 7:48:34 PM

For those looking at the Sony HBH-6xx headset, I just did some research prior to buying one and after reading Andrew's comparisons. There is currently an HBH-660 and an HBH-662. The 660 is supposedly BT1.1 (which just happens to be what our Treo650 is). The 662 supports BT 1.2 which allows for other phones that support 1.2 (such as the RAZR) and extended caller ID functions. FYI: the HBH-600 (not reviewed here) is a slightly different form factor than the 660/662. The 600 lacks the LCD display. Links to each can be found here:

HBH-600: <http://tinyurl.com/4sbdm>

HBH-660: <http://tinyurl.com/7gulu>

HBH-662: <http://tinyurl.com/7twgc>

Andrew - in your tests, did the LCD display on the HBH-660 show only the phone number in the callerID or the name as well? I've read some forum posts that seemed to differ. I'm assuming it would show the name for any number found in the address book and the number for any call that's not in your address book. But since you just tested them all, I thought I'd get the answer straight from you.

[This comment was edited to link to SonyEricsson's official HBH BT Headset pages.]

20 by Andrew | Aug 16, 2005 6:32:21 AM

A. Davis - Thanks for the clarification. The headset that I tested is indeed the HBH-662 (see 'Trusted Devices' screenshot at the top right of this post). I guess that this will have to be changed in the shop.

Insofar as the caller ID is concerned, only the number not the name appears.

Cheers, A.

21 by Rick Evans | Aug 16, 2005 8:31:31 PM

Am I the only one who has to re-pair (pun?) the bluetooth headset around half the times I try to use it?

BTW, I have the Palm Wireless Headset.

22 by carlos2 | Aug 22, 2005 9:58:39 PM

I've had the Treo headset for about a month now, and I have been very disappointed. The sound quality has been terrible. I have a hard time hearing the other party, but, worse yet, the other side can barely hear me. Furthermore, as I need to turn up the volume to hear, the other party hears an echo.

The inexpensive wired headset I used with my old motorola phone was significantly better.

Anyone have a similar experience or found a fix to improve the sound quality?

23 by shveckle | Aug 24, 2005 1:49:57 PM

An important feature for me is that the headset has caller ID and one can call from the caller ID list with the headset. The Jabra BT800 can do that but is not compatible with the treo 650.

24 by Isaac | Aug 25, 2005 1:51:26 PM

Multiple inconsistencies in the article. I would not buy a headset based on this.

25 by Brian Stein | Aug 26, 2005 3:38:26 PM

After reading the reviews here and on TreoCentral, I decided to ditch my Moto HS810 in favor of the Sony HBH-300, and I am VERY glad that I did.

While the improved sound quality is nice, my favorite improvement is how quickly this headset grabs control from the Treo and answers calls.

One correction to the above review is that it does have a charging indicator. The light along the boom mic will glow red while charging and then green when fully charged.

Thanks for the great review... enjoying bluetooth freedom so much more now!

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